1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

843 such as, in other parts of India, of the use of a knife or the cutting of anything; but ordinary enquiry elicited no clue to them.

844 It was said on page 106 that children are born in the menstruation hut or room. This is certainly the case so far as the private huts and rooms are concerned; but in my notes it is not clear whether births ever take place in the communal menstruation hut. They probably do not, because obviously it may be needed at any time for other women of the village, and I have notes of children in Hikpulla and Nugur, where there are communal menstruation huts, being born in a corner of the veranda of the house specially walled off for the purpose.

[777] Cases are known of a mother being delivered of a child in the fields or the forest, but this is considered very unlucky, and as soon as the mother knows that her hour is upon her, she must make every effort to get in time to the menstruation hut or room. During delivery she may have the comfort of the presence of her mother-in-law or some woman from the village; but there are no midwives, and the woman with her must not touch her or assist the delivery; the mother is expected to do everything for herself, and it is regarded as very wrong if she is unable to do so. They pray to the clan-god during a difficult delivery, but appear to do nothing else to assist the mother by either medicine or ceremony. The mother herself has to cut the navel-cord of her baby either with her husband's ordinary knife or with an arrow-head. She cuts it about three or four inches from its junction with the stomach, and binds it close to the junction with a ligature of cord, the portion between the cut and the ligature being left to dry and fall off; and she is expected to bury the placenta (*modi*) immediately after this under the house rubbish-heap outside the back of the house. If the child is born [845 dead, the mother has to bury it somewhere in the forest, going there 766] alone and digging the grave without assistance; it may not be buried in the regular village graveyard. Around Handawada a mother is expected to stay in the menstruation room for a full month after delivery; but the general rule in the interior of the Abujhmar hills is for her to remain there for eight days or until the navel-cord dries and falls off.

846 Everywhere it is taboo for the father to do any field or other work during this period of eight days before the navel-cord falls. No medicine is given to him. He must not sleep in the house during the period in most parts of the hills, but in the dormitory; around Handawada he sleeps in the portion of the *hala* room separated from the woman's portion by the *binda* mud threshold. He must not cook his own food during this period, and has to get a man friend to cook food for him in another house and bring it to

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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Chapter XVI

Death and Funeral Ceremonies

A. Hill Marias

The ordinary rule throughout the Abujhmar hills is to cremate the bodies of headmen and elders of influence and standing and of their wives, and to bury all others.

Except on the southern fringes of the hills, where the villages are influenced by contact with their Bison-horn Maria neighbours, the Hill Marias do not follow the Bison-horn custom of beating a drum from the roof of the house, which Russell and Hiralal predicate of all Marias. The custom is creeping into the hills from south of the Indrawati, and has for example already reached the Kutru Hill Maria villages of Lakka (Lanka) and Karangal; but there it is reserved for men of higher status. The drum used is the hill *turam* kettle-drum, and is usually one of those kept in the village dormitory; the village lads beat it continuously day and night from the death till the burial or cremation of the body.

News of the death is sent out to all the brother-clan and wife-clan relatives and friends of the deceased. The funeral is postponed for two or three days, to give them time to assemble. Then all the women gather in and around the house where the body is lying. A man is never left to die on a cot, but is lifted on to the ground as his end draws near; they say that their reason for this custom is simply that they do not want the dying man to fall off the cot in a last convulsion. Women are never allowed to sleep on a cot. They close the eyes of the corpse, and lift it on to a rough wicker-work bier, covering it over with a length of cloth. It is burned or buried with the clothes and jewellery that were on it at death. The women sit around the corpse and outside in the street, and break into loud keening for the dead.

For the last rites the body is not washed or otherwise prepared, but is left just as it was composed after death. Friends and relatives carry it out on the bier, the only person for whom it is taboo to touch or carry a body being the *waddai* clan-priest medium and his medium assistant (*leshi*). The bier heads the procession to the burial and cremation ground, and is followed by the remaining relatives and friends, the women still keening and beating their breasts.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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764 then a small chick, twists its neck, breaking the skin of its throat with his nails, sprinkles its blood on the rice, and leaves it there. He then ties a piece of cloth brought from his own house to the boughs of a *saja* tree overhanging the grave, and other pieces handed to him by relatives and friends who wish to honour the dead man, as well as strips of the dead man's clothes brought from his house. Next he, and after him the other affines of the dead man in turn, or, if a married woman has been buried, her father's kindred, take a leaf-cupful of *mahua* spirit, pouring a drop on the grave as an offering to the dead person, and after them the kinsmen of the dead do likewise. The *erramtogh* also offers the *hanal* little *bediya*[1] baskets of rice and *kuthi*, and an empty miniature *handi* (pot). The kinsmen of the dead man have to provide the *mahua* spirit and the grain, baskets and pot. Finally the grave, except the two front *hanal-gutta* posts, is generally surrounded with a fence of criss-crossed strips of bamboo.

766 For a cremation the procedure is much the same. The pyre is made ready beforehand, like the grave, and the body is laid on it. The *erramtogh* brings a burning log from the hearth of the dead man's house, and with it kindles the pyre; and then the kinsmen, the five village elders, and the affines each place a small piece of wood on the head of the corpse, uttering the same formula as when they throw clods of earth on a body in a grave. The pyre is almost always made at the foot of a *mahua* tree. They pile no leaves or logs over the ashes, but leave them there to the mercy of the elements, after fencing them, setting up *hanal-gutta* posts and a *hanal-garya* cromlech, and tying strips of cloth to overhanging *saja* boughs.

764 The ritual varies in different parts of the hills. In some tracts, particularly near Orcha and on the Narainpur side of the hills, they set up only one *hanal-gutta* post, in front of the grave, or none at all. The *mahua* spirit ritual also varies. After earth leaves and logs have been piled over the grave, and the *hanal-gutta* post and the cromlech, if any, have been set up, the *erramtogh* takes a leaf-cupful of liquor, pours a drop or two from it on the earth and logs piled above the head of the corpse, and drinks what remains; this is done after him in turn by the male affines, the kinsmen, and the women present.

The dead man's cot or sleeping-mat and the bier on which his body was carried to the funeral are always left by the grave; and often his dancing head-dress is deposited on the top of one of the *hanal-gutta* posts, while the grave is further adorned with his old fishing-rods and wooden representations of spears and axes. The bottom illustration on Plate XX shows a typical burial grave in

[1] See page 175 above.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
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Where, as in Orcha and most of the surrounding villages of the Chhota Dongar *pargana*, *kotokal* menhirs are no longer erected, a cow or pig is nevertheless sacrificed in this way in the village on the night after the funeral at the heir's house, and portions of the flesh or the liver when cooked are placed under the cromlech at the base of the *kanal-gutta* post, or, if there is no cromlech, on the grave, while the tail, and sometimes also a lower leg, from hock to hoof, are fastened by a cord from an overhanging *saja* bough. The usual feast and dance then follow. 769

One reason for the abandonment of the custom of erecting menhirs may be that the clans which have abandoned it have in fairly recent times abandoned their traditional for their present clan-areas; for it was the rule that the menhir should always be erected in the village from which the dead man or his ancestors had originally come, not in the village at which he was living at the time of his death. 178 764

A person who has killed himself, or who dies from cholera or small-pox, is not buried or cremated at the regular funeral ground, but in the forest at some distance from it. There had been no recent case in any village which I visited of a woman dying when pregnant or in child-birth, and no one could say what would be done in such a case. Persons killed by tigers or other wild animals must be burned, not buried, at the place where their remains are found, or to which they are brought for the inquest. They must never be brought into a village, for otherwise the dead man's *kanal* may bring the tiger there. The remains, if scattered, are collected and placed in a cloth brought from the dead man's house; but such bodies should be touched as little as possible. Logs are piled under the body where it lies and kindled, and anything found with the body or at the place where the tiger attacked the dead man is burnt with it; but no dancing dresses or other property are brought from his house to be burned with him, and no offerings of grain or *mahua* spirit are made at the grave. No *marma-kal* cairn and no *kotokal* menhir are set up for him; but there is nothing to prevent this being done for the victims of cholera or smallpox. 766

Treatment of abnormal deaths

B. Bison-horn Marias

The true Bison-horn Marias, as distinguished from members of clans once Hill Maria in culture but now adopting Bison-horn customs, cremate all their dead except those who die from abnormal causes. When a man dies, his son-in-law is sent for, and on arrival climbs on to the roof of the house with a *dol* drum, which he beats 764 763

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

766 At Paknar in May 1930 I tried the murderer of a man whose body had been taken to Jagdalpur by the police for *post mortem* examination and had been buried there. In the course of the trial I visited the spot where the accused had shot him dead with a bow and arrow as he and the villagers helping him were carrying his *kutki* harvest from his *penda* field to his granary. His kinsmen had performed funeral rites for him there, sacrificing, roasting and eating two cocks and a pig, hanging up the loin-cloth which he was wearing when killed, and which they had brought back from Jagdalpur, and throwing rice and other grains at the trunk of the tree. They had also thrown away there all the earthen pots in his house except the Pot of the Departed, and his wife had burnt her bangles there. They had poured a libation of *mahua* spirit on the ground at the foot of the tree, which had been stained by his blood, and had adjured his *hanal* to be contented with this, stay with the *hanal* of the other Departed and bring no trouble upon them. A little *mahua* seed oil had then been added in his name to the Pot of the Departed in the *wijja-lon* of his house.

Abnormal deaths

Often when a person is murdered or drowned or dies in any unnatural way, a great cairn of stones is erected over his remains at the spot where he died, known as a *punji-paknar* in Halbi, and any passer-by is supposed to pick up a stone and fling it on the top of the cairn. The custom is common to all the peoples of Bastar, [674] including the Hill Marias; in 1913 two Hill Marias murdered a Maria Lohar girl, with whom both had often cohabited, through fear of the disgrace one of them would incur if the child which she had conceived were born and she named him as the father. The village elders hushed up the murder, and removed the body to the head of a pass crossing the Tiralgarh hills, and there a huge *punji-paknar* was piled over the remains.

Victims of small-pox and women dying in pregnancy or child-birth are buried by Bison-horn Marias, but not in the regular cremation ground. Before these women can be buried, a *wadde* or *gunia* has to shut up her malignant spirit by driving iron nails into her knees and elbows. But *uraskal* menhirs are erected for them and for victims of small-pox. Persons killed by lightning are cremated at some distance from the ordinary cremation ground, and no menhir may be erected for them. Menhirs are also forbidden for persons killed by tigers, whose remains are burned in the forest where they are found, with whatever possessions were with them when attacked or killed. A dummy tiger is made of bamboo sticks, taken to the boundary of the village, and there burnt.

2: Elwin · E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria ·

to its prey, to protect the boys and girls going out on dancing expeditions, to ensure that the drum gives its accustomed thunder. Life and death are thus united by these beliefs and rites, and the whole of existence is seen as a single sequence where physical death is but an incident which in no way disturbs the continuity of interest or relationship.

V. Funerary Rites

In the west, Muria death customs are dominated by Hill Maria influence. In Amgaon, the Jhoria Muria said that their funerary rites were 'things of the Maria Raj'. As we move east, where the Muria population probably represents an earlier Gond immigration from the north, customs are not unlike those typical of the Gond of the Central Provinces. The north-east of Bastar, however, has been more open to Hindu influence and it is not always easy to tell what the original traditions were.

The Muria bury important people, little children, chelik and motiari, and the victims of small-pox. They cremate all others. They lay the corpse, whether of man or woman, on its back with the head to the east. At Padbera, the Gaita said, 'It is because we came from the east. East is "up" and west is "down" '.

Members of each clan and either sex are disposed in separate places. Those who die from unusual causes are taken far away into the jungle. In Palari I was told that the remains of a tiger's victim should be burnt on the actual scene of death. Usually the corpse is placed under a mahua tree.

I will first describe one of the several funerals that I have witnessed, and then give any variations that I have recorded elsewhere.

On the night of 8 December 1940, in Bauri, a village of the Abujhmar foothills, a woman of about forty years named Dhako, the wife of Genjru of the Wadder clan, died and was carried home on a rough litter to her husband's house at Amgaon. She had died of 'a watery swelling of the body', perhaps dropsy, which is generally regarded as a punishment for adultery. The people were very reticent about speaking of the cause of her death and I never was able to hear the real story.

Since it is taboo for a woman to sleep on a cot, Dhako died on the ground and was again laid on the floor of her own house covered with a sheet. Many women, assembled in the house and outside in the street, wailed loudly from time to time. Gradually the relatives gathered and, when all were there, the corpse was carried out on a bamboo mat into the courtyard. Six women sat round weeping. An old woman of the Wadder clan (which can marry with the Partabi clan to which the dead woman originally belonged), but not a member of the family, now tied a little rice and a cowrie in knots on either side of the cloth. There were three knots on each side joined by a thread which ran criss-cross over the body. They did not bathe the corpse nor close the eyes, but the woman's little daughter, a child about five years old, put haldi on her mother's face, and the other female relatives present did the same.

Meanwhile a group of chelik, most of whom were related to Genjru, were busy making a sort of ladder to serve as bier. This they covered with dry grass. The corpse was lifted out and placed upon it. The chelik took it on their shoulders and went into the jungle followed by both men and women. Genjru's younger sister followed immediately behind the bier throwing rice over it. Another woman carried a basket containing three different roots and bits of haldi.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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bullock and enjoy a great feast. In Randhna I saw several such pillars and near them a few memorial stones. In Kopra there were three pillars and in Charkai one. 769

In Baghbera, not far from the Orissa border, there is a magnificent mango grove with shrines for Bara Pen and the Village Mother. Not far from these shrines, under a sarai tree, there is a stone about two feet high which is used as a memorial menhir for all members of the Poyami clan in that area. When any member of the clan dies the people come to the stone and make the usual offerings. When I saw it, there were two bundles of straw in the tree above, symbolizing the roof of the stone's temple, and a tethering rope which had been used for cow-sacrifice. Tied round it was a rope made of bark with its end splayed out to look like a flower. The Muria said that the origin of this was that a very old man of the Poyami clan died long ago and came to his descendants in a dream saying, 'In such and such forest there is a stone; bring it for me'. They did as he commanded and later when other members of the same clan died they too came in dreams and said, 'Take us to where our grandfather is'.

Finally there is the custom that we have already noticed, of placing a stone in front of a modern tomb. Here we can see clearly how ancient tradition survives alongside modern innovations.

XVI. The Danger of the Abnormal: Death from Wild Animals

The Muria have the most elaborate ceremonies to meet the dangers of abnormal death, for it is in their country that tigers are most common and tragedies most frequent. When such an incident occurs, the chelik collect the remains of the deceased and his possessions at the very place of death and burn them. They blow a hunting-horn over the pyre and run away. 766●

A day or two later the male members of the house go to the spot with other villagers. They dig up some of the blood-stained earth and make an image of the dead man; with rice-flour they make an image of the tiger. They place these together inside two circles made of flour and haldi, and draw a line of flour representing a rope to join the two together. The Gaita sacrifices chickens and eggs, saying, 'Go and take your dog to some other land. Tie it up properly there and keep it safe. Don't bring it here, we don't want any dogs here'. Then he hits and breaks the model tiger with a sickle crying, 'Tiger! Tiger!'

The chickens are now cut up into a great many little bits, and some of these are given to members of the party and roasted and eaten on the spot. Bones and leaves used for this little feast must be buried carefully, for if a witch got hold of them she could use them to bring the tiger back. The party now breaks up and each member takes a solitary and zigzag route home, throwing away the little bits of chicken as he goes. The idea of this is that if the ghost of the deceased tries to return to his village, he will be puzzled by the roundabout route and will be so busy eating the bits of chicken that he will never get there.

Women do not attend this ceremony, for if a woman's shadow were to fall on the materials of the feast, the tiger would come again. But if a woman is killed by a tiger, a digging-stick is thrown into the ashes of the pyre with the idea that her ghost will take it to dig roots in the jungle and not trouble the people in the village.

After a few days all those who took any active part in the cremation ceremony—such as carrying the remains or preparing the pyre—go to the place

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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766 and make customary offerings in the name of the tiger, the dead man and Bagharam Pat to clear themselves of infection. If this is not done, the tiger haunts their dreams.

After an interval, which varies from a week to three years, the people go to bring the soul of the dead man to the proper place, where it will be mingled with his ancestors. The household prepares a feast and invites all relatives. At the east of the village they build an open shed with two poles in the middle and on the floor trace a square with rice-flour. A small pot is filled with flour and put in the middle of the square, and above it another empty pot closed with a lid. A ring, threaded on a fine cord and tied between the two poles above the pot, is swung to and fro. The elders sit round and sing the Burkal Pata, or Tiger Song, which I will quote presently. As they sing this, the dead man's soul comes, the string breaks and the ring falls on to the lid of the pot.

The Gaita at once removes the upper pot and examines the flour in the lower vessel. If there is a 'tiger's mark' on the flour, they believe that a tiger will again devour the man at his next birth—and since the man will be reborn in his own family this means, of course, that the tiger will again visit and harry the same village. If there is a cow's mark, the more Hinduized Muria say that the dead man will be reborn as a cow and then be eaten by a tiger. But if there is a man's footprint, all will be well. They then take the ring, which is known as *Bāgh-hanāl mundi*, to a tree (usually a saja tree) nearby, and hang it up there saying, 'Now this is your home; live here and don't trouble us'.

After this the people feast, but not on meat. When all is over they throw the pots, leaves and leaf-cups into the river, bathe and return home.

A cat's footprint on the floor is considered very ominous. 'When a man is eaten by a tiger', I was told at Remawand, 'his soul dwells in the tiger's tail. On the same day of the week on which he was cremated, a small cat forms itself out of the ashes of the pyre and wanders away into the jungle. If a man sees it and recognizes it, calling it by the name of the dead man, it disappears. If not, and if the cat looks at the man, and he says nothing, another tiger will come to trouble the village.'

If a man is killed by a bear, the same ceremonies are observed.

The Burkal Pata, which is sung while the 'ring of the tiger-ghost' swings to and fro above the earthen pots, is often dragged out to an enormous length. It consists of a formula, which can be repeated as often as necessary, accusing one god after another of having sent the tiger which killed the man.

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Porro sātu dipu ra.	In the Upper World are seven islands.
Ale ale ale ale!	*Ale ale ale ale!*
Ariy sātu dipu ra.	In the Lower World are seven islands.
Ide dipu aroy ra.	Bad is this Middle World.
Nāte nāye talur ra:	There is the Village Mother:
Awe sangu manong ra:	She did not help him:
Awe tinda hitung ra.	She gave him up to be devoured.
Tāna hawār badu ra?	Who follows after her?
Use mudiyāl penu ra.	There is Use Mudial Pen.
Nima bāra tinwi ra?	Was it you who ate him?
Nima baliy hati ra;	You were wandering round about;
Nai pairvi hati ra.	You had a dog with you.
Bāra joring nai ra.	There are twelve pairs of dogs.
Nima chucheh hiti ra.	You gave orders to the dog.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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Guddūng oda bādu ra,	It came hiding in the grass,
Hupe lekha poyūndu ra.	It caught him like a rat.
Hajār rupiya ta jīwa ra.	The soul is worth a thousand rupees.
Jīwa mukaīn kili ra.	You have destroyed the soul.
Ade jīwa putto ra.	The soul cannot return again.
Bada diya ta puja ra?	What offering did he fail to give?
Puja badu barah matar ra?	Did he fail to give what he had promised?
Adenk ise titi ra?	Was that why you ate him?
Nima gala tinavi ra.	But it wasn't you who ate him.
Nikuna ijor ilan ra.	I said it was you (but I was wrong).
Hongu dāpu ayma ra:	Don't be angry:
Sāto berāng johār ra.	I give you a sevenfold greeting.

Use Mudial Pen is acquitted, and now Hirto Mudial Pen is accused in exactly the same words. He too is found innocent and the singers, afraid that they may have angered him, beg him not to be offended and greet him seven times with their Johar. Then in the song as I have it recorded, Muyang Waddai is accused—presumably of black magic—then Lingo Mudial Pen, Kara Harra Pen, the Rau of Tipagarh, the Kandra Kaniya, the Rau of Raughat, the Mata of the man's own home, and finally Ispural. Of Ispural, which is a variant on Mahapurub or Bhagavan, the Supreme Being in whose hands are the issues of life and death, it is said,

Nimāy ise titi ra.	It was you who ate him.
Hāyna hago asdu ra;	The time of his death had come;
Adenk ise oti ra.	That was why you took him.

But even Ispural is proved innocent, and at last the singers decide that it was the dead man's own ancestors, the Departed of his own house, who desired his company and sent the tiger to bring him.

Lela ise mudiyālor ra,	The ancient of the house,
Abe ise titur ra,	It was he who ate him,
Jori pandila otung ra.	To gain a companion for himself.
Mākun jori tāstur ra,	He left our companion behind,
Tenke ise otung ra.	That was why he took him.[1]

XVII. The Danger of the Abnormal: The Ondar Muttai

Throughout India the ghost of a woman who has died in pregnancy, in child-birth or immediately after child-birth is feared and dreaded.[2] The

[1] Russell and Hiralal have many accounts of the precautions taken by various tribes after a man has been killed by a tiger, some of which resemble those of the Muria. They describe the rites of the Baiga (Russell and Hiralal, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 84), Bhattra (II, p. 274), Dumal (II, p. 536), Gond (III, p. 81 and III, p. 93), Halba (III, p. 274), Kalanga (III, p. 328), Kawar (III, p. 393), Kurmi (IV, p. 79), Panwar (IV, p. 346), Sansia (IV, p. 498) and Savara (IV, p. 483). There is no particular reason in most cases why the customs recorded should be peculiar to the various tribes; nor why they should be recorded for some tribes and not for others. Probably very similar rites are common throughout the Central Provinces and indeed most of aboriginal India.

S. C. Roy has described the rites of the Uraon and I have described a Baiga ceremony that I personally witnessed in the Pandaria Zamindari (*The Baiga*, pp. 298ff.). According to Russell and Hiralal, the Gond and Halba resemble the Muria in suspending a ring over a pot of water, which they watch till it falls. The Bhattra, Kawar, Uraon and others deem a man as a tiger and either tie him up, banish him or force him to release his prey, with the idea that what is done in symbol will be achieved in effect.

[2] The Churelin or Chundi, as this ghost is called elsewhere, is a familiar figure in Indian ethnographic literature. One of the earliest accounts is by Crooke, op. cit., Vol. I,

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115 with a particular knack of achieving connexion and intercourse with supernatural beings and, at the great festivals of the State, scores of Ganda and Halba mediums fall into a trance and dance ecstatically before the gods. It will be noticed also that in every case the Churlin dances, that she is 'bound' by charms, cohabits with her captor for many years, bears him seven children and finally disappears on recovering her original garments. It is impossible to say what is at the bottom of this widely distributed tradition.

115 In order to avoid the danger of the Ondar Muttai special precautions are
766 taken at the time of her disposal. The Muria, in common with everyone in Bastar, believe that she cannot cross water, so they cremate her body between two streams. The priest makes four iron nails and drives these into each corner of the pyre. Sometimes nails of kassi wood are used. Thorn-bushes are placed above the body. It is considered very important to bury the body immediately. Even if the woman dies at midnight, she must be taken out. They bury the corpse, and only unmarried boys are allowed to handle it. They carry it quickly to the grave, throw the earth upon it and run away. On the day the body is buried, the earth round the grave trembles.

In many villages the Gaita or Waddai goes round the grave throwing mandia grain upon it with the idea that the ghost will be so busy picking up and counting the small grains that she will not have time to do anything else.

The Dorla of Dubatota tie bundles of thorns round the wrists and ankles of the corpse. The Dhurwa of Netanar said that the Gaita drives iron nails through the hands and feet. The Muria of Phunder described how once when a pregnant woman died, the chelik tied her body to the bier with a very strong rope and after lowering it into the grave the Gaita drove four nails into the ground at its four corners. This protection, however, was not successful and so a herd of she-buffaloes was taken to the grave and made to trample upon it. This is another example of the belief that there is some special protection against the Ondar Muttai in the buffalo. The Hill Maria round Chota Dongar said that when a pregnant woman died only women could dispose of the corpse. Women dig the grave on the far side of the village boundary and on the four corners put bits of iron slag and young shoots of the cotton tree. If they put a memorial stone for her, which, in any case, will be a small one, they put a cotton tree pole there also. The Muria sometimes lay an ebony bough over the grave.

115 The Ondar Muttai or Churlin, however, returns to her own country after a certain time. For example, the Muria say that in Jeth (July) at the time of violent wind and rain, the Ondar Muttai goes to her own land, the Rakasgarh, and mingles with her own people. The Hill Maria said the same thing, that after three years she goes to her own country, and I have found a similar tradition among the Bison-horn Maria. What happens to her there is not revealed.

XVIII. Summary

[761] Perhaps the most striking thing in the Muria attitude to death is their emphasis on the continuity of all existence, their belief that death is but an incident in a vital process which continues after the soul has shed its temporary physical integument. But the Muria have not been able to take the further step forward from this into a serene faith and hope in the happiness of the dead, and their desire to help and serve the living. The dead appear rather as dissatisfied, mischievous and wayward, deeply interested in human life but anxious to interfere, to display their power, almost to show off, rather than to assist mankind.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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indicate their will to the living through the Siraha or Waddai 769
and by appearing to them in dreams, and it is considered 775
highly dangerous to ignore their behests.

The necessity for their propitiation has affected every aspect 769
of Maria life. Offerings are made to them at every festival and at every domestic or village ceremony. They are remembered as a matter of routine in every magic formula along with the Earth Mother, Danteshwari and other deities. A few drops of liquor are offered to them every time a Maria drinks. Fire from the hearth of the Pot of the Departed in the Gaita's house is used to light the first fire in the forest clearings and the sacred fires at festivals. The importance of the Ancestors, who remain as a sort of conservative society to safeguard the traditions of the tribe, will appear throughout this book and need not be elaborated now.

VII

Women dying in pregnancy or child-birth are buried, so are 764
the victims of small-pox and of such other diseases as the 766
Siraha may from time to time direct. All others are cremated, a fact which often makes police investigation difficult and even impossible.

At one time (I am not sure how far the custom survives) 766
the Waddai was buried naked and in an upright posture. The first child of a house, if it dies under five years old, is buried in the same erect posture, with face to the east—as [787]
there is light there, and beneath a mahua tree—for it is fertile of flowers and fruit, a good omen for the family.

In a funeral the chief actors are the Hanagunda or Hanal- 764
gaita, who is the master of ceremonies, and the sister's son or son-in-law of the deceased. The Hanagunda has to tie a thread round the corpse and hang the cow's-tail on the menhir. It is his wife's duty to wash the body, and to take cooked rice and haldi to the pyre. The sister's son has to climb on the roof to beat a drum to summon the relatives: he sits on the uraskal while it is being carried to its place; he makes the appointed offerings before the stone: he kills the sacrificial and festal cow.

After death the dead man is laid with his head to the east in the living room of his house. His sister's son takes a stick

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764 has been specially hollowed out for this purpose. Usually
273 there is no stock of rice-beer at hand and it cannot be made so quickly. The Maria then mix a little mandia flour with water and give this instead.

If for any reason in the course of the ceremony some rite or custom is omitted the spirit of the dead man may attack one or other of the mourners in order to show his displeasure. For example, at Gadapal, Burka Peda told me that they once forgot to give landa to the old menhirs and the insulted Dead attacked his father's sister and she fell down in a fit. They quickly gave both landa and mahua liquor to all the menhirs and she recovered. Again in Mahara-Karka one Kuhrami Eriya was hurled into the fire by the angry ghost and his leg was burnt. If this happens it is a good plan for the victim to run and catch
[789] hold of the bamboo poles with which the stone was carried. The Gaita pours water upon him and the angry ghost leaves him alone.

IX

322 When a very well-known or wealthy man dies his family
●766 sometimes erects a carved wooden pillar to his memory.
554 There are very few of these pillars, though the custom of making them is far from moribund, but the expense is great and only the most important people are considered worthy of them.

322 These pillars are called by Grigson urasgatta, a word that
766 is obviously formed on the same plan as uraskal, from *urasna* meaning 'to bury' and *gatta*—'a pillar'. I have not myself found any Maria using the word or even recognizing it when it has been put to them. It may be that its use has died out. The Maria to whom I have spoken call these pillars either *munde* (Gondi) or *kambha* (Halbi or Hindi).

The pillars are usually erected near a highway—not necessarily a motorable one. It should simply be near any road or path that is constantly used by the people. The pillars are usually made of saja or sarai wood and are erected with ceremonies very similar to those for a stone.

There are not many of these pillars, but they are worth looking at. There is a very fine one near Dilmilli

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322 766 on the main road from Jagdalpur to Dantewara. Near Massenar at the end of a long line of menhirs is the pillar in memory of the famous Kopa Dhurwa, which has a carving of the old man wearing his jubilee medal. There are others at Chinger, on the way to Chitrakot and in a few other places.

322 766 532 Each pillar attempts to be a biography in wood of the deceased. We see him important carrying the symbols of wealth and power and riding on a horse or elephant; we see the dancers that delighted him and the landa pot which never failed to give him pleasure. We are shown the knives and axes that he used; the animals that he saw or hunted in the forest. The pillar for Oyami Masa, the homicide, had several carvings illustrating his work as a Siraha.

X

623 632 Every Maria village has a panel of secular and religious officials. There is the headman (often called the Peda), his assistant (the Kandki) and a Kotwar, who has the duty of reporting to the police all births and deaths within his jurisdiction. Each group of villages belongs to what is called a Pargana, a relic of the older administrative system of the State, and at the head of each Pargana there is a Pargana Manjhi. Each village has its panchayat presided over by the village headman, and each Pargana has a Pargana panchayat which is a Court of Appeal. In 1932, the village panchayats among all the aboriginals in Bastar were entrusted with a certain amount of criminal and civil work. The regular Courts were deprived of jurisdiction over the tribesmen for no fewer than seventeen Sections of the Indian Penal Code, including those dealing with simple hurt and assault, thefts of property up to five rupees, mischief, trespass and adultery. The panchayats were permitted to deal with claims for civil damages that might arise out of the criminal offences, and in other civil claims not exceeding twentyfive rupees. They were permitted to impose fines of not more than twentyfive, and in marriage cases to allow expenses up to fifty rupees. The Kotwar had the business of reporting panchayat decisions to the police. An appeal

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764 have done so if they had been able to afford it. When Doga of Jabeli killed his wife, but was acquitted on appeal, no ceremony was performed for the dead woman at the time. But when Doga returned home, he himself made a small pyre and carried his wife's clothes and ornaments in his own hands, and thus performed the usual ceremonies.

The day after the burning of the pyre two men go to inspect the ashes. When Oyami Anda was hanged they found 'signs of hanging'—the marks of a rope—among the ashes.

765 The funeral drum is not beaten for the ceremonies of a man who is hanged or of his victim or when somebody commits suicide. Otherwise the ceremonies are largely the same as usual.

After Kadti Hunga was hanged for murdering his wife Gangi, the clothes of both murderer and victim were put together and covered with earth, and a small pillar of cotton wood was erected nearby.

Sometimes the dead man's clothes are not brought to the house, but are kept outside the village for fear that they may bring the angry ghost along with them. At Killepal and other villages it was the custom to burn the clothes at a cross-roads outside the village.

In the Konta Tahsil, the Maria have a custom of making a small doll or image to serve as a corpse. An unpleasant, quarrelsome fellow called Ido Deva committed a murder at Muler and was hanged. After his death the villagers did not fetch his clothes from the jail but when the fact of his hanging was confirmed, they cut a bit of the gongum tree 'about the length of your forearm', dressed it up in some of Deva's old cloth, put a pair of his ear-rings where the ears might be, and one of his necklaces round the 'neck'. Then just as if it was a real corpse they put it on a bier, covered it with a cloth and carried it out to the pyre (which was in the ordinary cremation-ground) and burnt it. At the head of the pyre they placed a forked saja branch and hung a cow's tail upon it. When I went to the cremation-ground I saw Deva's ashes still fresh and only a few yards away an older pile of ashes for the man he had murdered. Nearby still lay the pots and a specially-made basket for offering rice to the offended ghost.

Sometimes the corpse is cremated near the menhirs. At

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775 of Chichari described how this happened to three of his
753 fellow-prisoners and they all died. Boti of Telam suffered a similar visitation and was ill for a whole year.

768 In several places I found that a house or a village had been
14 moved from its original site after a murder had been committed there. At Aranpur, for example, the house in which Chewa killed his father-in-law was destroyed, and a new house was built elsewhere for the widow and other members of the family. At Doriras the whole village was shifted from its former site in the year following the murder of Kawasi Boti. Mulsi village also was shifted after the murder of Rawa Harma.

VI

764 The funeral ceremonies of a suicide are performed in the
762 same way with the clothes and ornaments taking the place of the corpse. When Masa's younger wife hanged herself at Samgiri, her body after the post-mortem examination was buried at Dantewara. Her clothes and ornaments were taken out to a cross-roads and cremated according to the customary ritual. Her scythe, rice-husker and winnowing-fan were placed at the spot, but the scythe was picked up and carried home by one of her husband's relatives. Next morning they went to inspect the ashes and found distinct marks of hanging. A chicken was used to divine the cause of death,
[787] and it indicated that the woman had been angry and committed suicide in a fit of temper. The tragedy was in fact due to the girl's complaint that her husband did not pay her enough attention. The chicken's neck was then twisted, the head removed, split into through the beak and thrown away.

762 In Borgum village, the wife of Markami Pide committed
766 suicide because she was in love with another man and did not care for her husband. The body was taken to Dantewara for the post-mortem and buried there. The clothes were taken back to the village and burnt outside together with her mat, winnowing-fan, rice-husker and sickle. The next day the Priest of the Dead put rice and roots round the pyre. He made seven small piles of rice and brought a chicken saying, 'You were angry and put an end to your life; now become cool and rest in peace here and trouble none of us,

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for this is your home'. When the chicken had pecked at the rice, he twisted its neck and threw it on the still-burning pyre. A pig and a cow were then sacrificed and an uraskal erected the same day. After returning to the house they made a rough drawing with flour of the garden and of the house with its various rooms on the floor. On this pattern they again offered rice to a hen saying, 'We have now made a house for you; don't stay outside any longer, but remain here'.

The ghost of the suicide, like that of a murderer, becomes a Mirchuk and lives in an ant-hill. If the Mirchuk gets angry, it may possess a member of the family, and he too may commit suicide unless the proper offerings are not made at once. The suicide's ghost may also come to the village and cause trouble in a variety of ways. As we have seen elsewhere, the Mirchuk is often used as a familiar by witches. It is most important that the soul of a suicide should not be 'mingled with the Dead'. In some villages they say that this prohibition is absolute. In Dugeli, they said that they should wait a year. A menhir should not be erected. A remarkable double suicide at Khutepal illustrates the danger of ignoring these rules. Bandi, the headman of this village, had two wives. One day they quarrelled, and the elder wife hanged herself in a rage. Her funeral ceremony was performed as though the death had been a natural one. Her soul was mingled with the Dead, and an uraskal memorial pillar was erected for her in the place used by other members of the clan. It is believed that, when this is done, the suicide's ghost quarrels with the other ghosts of the clan and annoys them. In this case the angry Dead so troubled the wife of Bandi's younger son, who was living in the same house, that she too committed suicide after a quarrel with her mother-in-law. This second suicide was regarded by the villagers as the immediate result of having erected a memorial pillar and mingled the soul of the older woman with the ancestral Dead. When the girl's ceremonies were performed, therefore, they carefully burnt her clothes in a place away from the usual crematorium and, although they gave her an uraskal, they did not sacrifice a cow or hang its tail in the usual manner round the stone.

At Dualkarka, however, they said that an uraskal should

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762
764 never be made for anyone who commits suicide or is killed by violence. Here they described how, when the members of the household in which a suicide has occurred are feasting at the close of the funeral ceremonies, they suddenly feel as though somebody is strangling them, and to get rid of this unpleasant feeling they have to go to the village boundary and make the usual offerings. If the dead man has been killed by a tiger or has been murdered, the relatives feel that they are being mauled by some great animal or that an unseen hand is belabouring them with a heavy stick.